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La Religion des Primitifs. By A. LEROY. Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne et Cie, 1909. 16°, pp. vii, 518.

The author of this really remarkable book is A. LeRoy, Bishop of Alinda and Superior General of the *Pères du Saint-Esprit*. His missionary career in Africa began in 1877 and continued, with two brief interruptions, to the time of his writing the book. He has thus been for nearly thirty years in contact with African natives. His first experiences were in East Africa, entering (like the explorers of that time) from Bagamoyo and penetrating to the Victoria Nyanza, the Nyassa, and the Upper Congo. He later made extended journeys from Somali Land to Mozambique and in the country behind. In 1893 his activities were transferred to the West Coast, to Gabun. He has thus come into contact with coast peoples, with the dwellers of the Lake Region and with the tribes of the equatorial forest. He has met Bantu of many tribes and many and separated groups of pygmies. He speaks some Bantu languages, and has come into truly intimate relations with his blacks for whom he evinces great affection.

A first assumption might be that a book upon African religions by a Catholic bishop could be neglected by the anthropologist. Not so with the book before us. Bishop Le Roy is a man of candid spirit and broad views; he has read and studied anthropological theories; he has grappled with the definition and significance of *totemism*, *exogamy*, and those kindred words which have caused prolonged and bitter controversy among ethnographers and sociologists. He finds himself unable to agree with prevailing views regarding the origin of religion. He aims to meet us on our own ground. With firm convictions of his own, he tries to disabuse his mind of prejudice; he presents the facts which he has found, tests our theories by them, and states the conclusions to which he is driven. He does all this with an honesty and candor which compel admiration and a vigor and force which demand consideration. Not that we agree with all the bishop's conclusions, in fact we dissent from most of them. But such a challenge of our views is worth far more to our science than many of the ingenious, but premature, theories with which anthropological literature abounds. LeRoy presents a mass of instructive and interesting material; we shall consider but a single point. He says:

"The religion of the primitives ought then to be as clearly as possible separated from Magic, from Mythology and from Superstition. When this is done one finds it to consist of recognition of departed spirits, of tutelary spirits, and of a sovereign being, Master of Nature and Father of Men, with moral observances and the practice of prayer, offering and sacrifice" (p. 453).

And again:

"Had we not the constant fear of misrepresenting the beliefs of our indigenes in attempting to put them in formal statement we would say that for them the invisible world is composed, so to say, of three planes, of which the first would be formed by the spirits of the dead, the second by spirits of extra human origin, and the third by that sovereign being, whom we have already recognized as the mysterious Master of Nature and for whom we find no name more just to apply than that of 'God'" (p. 136).

In his discussion of this sovereign being, Bishop LeRoy makes an important contribution to the question of "high gods," so much considered of late. While for him the existence of this notion is explicable solely on the basis of an original divine inspiration, he presents facts in his discussion which perhaps point to a reasonable explanation of a matter which has long been a stumbling block. The evidence that savage and barbaric peoples have an idea of a supreme being is too strong to be brushed away by flippant reference to missionary or other outside influences. It is a waste of time to struggle against facts. Such a notion exists and in practically the same form among a host of tribes in Australia, Africa, and America. LeRoy finds it clear and unquestionable even among the pygmies. If such a belief exists among the religious ideas of low tribes, there must be something in the range of simple thought and life experiences of those tribes, upon which or out of which the belief has grown. Our task should be to find the origin of the belief—as we believe we have found the origin of animism and of the notion of a separable soul.

Of course a complete and precise definition of this superior being is nowhere made. LeRoy, however, brings together some of the elements which generally occur in the conception:

"This notion brings naturally to the spirit that of master, of proprietor, of sovereign of the Universe; *Mwingyezi*, "he who has the power." Taylor writes "And it is no doubt why the natives experience a sort of scruple in selling a piece of land: in their thought one can only alienate the trees." If the reader will remember, this is exactly the statement which we ourselves have previously made.

Master of the World, God is also Father of Men; *reru yajio*, our father, the Mpongwe of the Gabun voluntarily say of him and their neighbors the Benga have an identical name in the expression *paia nzambi*.

Author of life he is also author of death, in the sense that he takes when and as he will the souls of men without anyone being able to hinder or to blame him. This is why, in case of death, one takes care to seek from whence the fatal issue has come: if it has been brought about by an enemy, open or secret, the relative ought to be avenged; if it is caused by a spirit, it should be disarmed by a sacrifice

but if it comes from God, there is nothing to be done. What can one do against God?

* * *

It is God finally who sends the rain in warning men by the voice of the thunder, and it is he who withholds it; it is he who makes the grass grow in the plains for the herds; it is he who clothes the forests in verdure, who makes the fruits ripen and the fields to prosper; it is he who nourishes all—trees, animals and men. . . . The entire world, in a word, is dependent upon him."

There are various names for God throughout the Bantu languages and LeRoy makes an interesting analysis of them, to find the underlying ideas, but space does not admit of its presentation. A final quotation only can be made; it points to a series of facts and ideas often mentioned by the author, which appear to deserve careful study.

"This fundamental conception, always living and inspirer of so many others, is that man in this world is not completely at home. He finds himself therein without much knowing how, nor through whom, nor why; he has wandered and he wanders in a domain which seems freely open, he meets there with many things which he desires. . . . But all this is not of his making, he is not its owner, it would be wrong for him to dispose of it as master, and that which nature thus offers to him, is it not a sort of bait, put within reach of his hand to tempt him?

* * *

It is thus that the Master of things, who, for concealing himself from human eyes, is no less redoubtable, frequently does reveal himself by unexpected manifestations and checks us in our immoderate desires of putting our hand on all; whence, without speaking of indigestions where the forbidden food makes protest, proceed poisonings, sicknesses, deaths, epidemics, accidents, floods, drought, etc. For if, consciously or unconsciously, we did not disarrange the machinery of the world by throwing in among the mechanism handfuls of sand—that is, forbidden acts—it would truly never be thrown out of gear. Or to speak in other terms, if the universe appeared before man like a table spread with food, there are yet certain precautions to take, certain courtesies to perform, certain restraints to observe before seating oneself at the feast."

Are there not here suggested some thoughts of savage man so simple and natural that they might form a ready basis for a truly primitive (or early) conception of a "high god"? FREDERICK STARR.

Im Afrikanischen Urwald. By FRANZ THONNER. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen). 1898. 8°, pp. x, 116, plates 86, maps 2.

Von Kongo zum Ubangi. By FRANZ THONNER. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1910. 8°, pp. xi, 116, plates 114, maps 2.

Thonner's primary object in his African expeditions was the collecting of plants. His first expedition was in 1896, his second in 1908-1909: